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**General Lyles**

## **AFMC meeting transformation challenges**

*by Gen Lester L. Lyles, Commander, Air Force Materiel Command*

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio (AFMCNS) — It is said that the one constant in life is change. Organizations and people either adapt to changing environments and move forward, or they become ineffective. We are part of the most potent combat force history has known. But, history has also shown us that no country may rest on its laurels.

The United States faces a world that has changed dramatically in recent years. There are new global threats to our national security. Many of these threats come from people and organizations outside formal states willing to use weapons of terror to achieve their ends. Technology has increased the flow of information and access to destructive weapons. The pace of change is staggering. If there was any doubt the world has changed, that reality hit home during last September's terrorist attacks.

The Department of Defense is meeting these new challenges with an ambitious effort to transform its organizations and processes. This transformation will ensure America's military forces continue to effectively secure our nation. Despite an unprecedented war against terrorism on two fronts, DoD is committed to this effort. If we do not rapidly transform, our leaders have warned that we risk losing the next war. This is an imperative none of us can afford to ignore!

Our Air Force is joined in the military's effort to transform. We seek to create for ourselves a significantly greater—or asymmetric—advantage over potential adversaries. Achieving this will take new operational concepts and advances in technology. It will also require changes in our organizational structure and business practices. All of these efforts are under way, in every Air Force command, including our own.

My vision for Air Force Materiel Command is to be the Air Force's first choice for solutions. We must be recognized as "world class" in all our operations. We must be innovative and proactive, effective and efficient. We must be consistently responsive to warfighter needs. Using an integrated approach, we will seek quick results from some leading programs—called "pathfinders"—while transforming overall processes that will benefit all of us long-term.

AFMC's role in the overall Air Force transformation is absolutely pivotal. Through our mission of providing warfighting capabilities, our command integrates the Air Force's operational and business transformations. There is no way the Air Force can successfully transform without considering the technology, acquisition, and sustainment support that we provide.

This command is no stranger to transformation. Over the years, our goal of providing the warfighter with combat capability has remained constant. However, our organizations, our processes, and our technologies have frequently changed. Today's transformation is a steep new path on our journey, one on which we are already embarked. The pace will be rapid and the changes radical. Expect the effects to be far-reaching.

Working closely with Air Force leadership, we are transforming our acquisition and sustainment practices to meet today's demanding environment. This will take increasingly agile acquisition processes. It will mean closer alignment of developmental and operational testing. It will also require making our depots as efficient as the best depot maintenance repair organizations in the commercial sector.

One AFMC initiative embraced by Air Force leadership and warfighters alike is enterprise management. This puts a single person in charge of a system of systems, leading to better development decisions and making it easier for customers to get solutions from a single point of contact. Enterprise management shatters information stovepipes. It dovetails perfectly with agile acquisition and other transformation efforts.

We have been challenged to cut cycle acquisition time—the period it takes to go from identifying the requirements to fielding a system or capability—by three quarters. That four-to-one cycle time reduction will not be easy to achieve. It will take major increases in productivity and decreases in workload. We may need to divest ourselves of some low-payoff programs. Other prerequisites, such as the need for more stability in funding, may require support all the way to Congress.

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The key to a more responsive acquisition system is adopting a process of spiral development. This incremental approach to developing weapons systems produces improvements in stages. Besides delivering capability to the warfighter more rapidly, it allows for course corrections at each stage to improve the final product. This will enable us to deliver 21st century weapons to counter our 21st century threats.

We cannot achieve this independently! Everything we do, in the science and technology, sustainment and acquisition arenas, we do for the warfighter—but we cannot do any of it without the warfighter.

Spiral development also means spiral requirements. The warfighter must work with us to ensure we understand and interpret requirements appropriately. We must share information on science and technology and which applications are feasible. We must also play in the development of Air Force doctrine and in wargaming. Success will take a collaborative team effort between equal partners. We are warriors supporting warriors!

To help guide us through this transformation, I have chartered a team that will formally stand up in May. It will be staffed with some of our best and brightest. They will have free rein to “think out of the box,” and to develop ideas to improve the way we do business. We may not be able to implement all ideas, but we’ll certainly gain a new perspective. In the interim, a working group and a transition team drawn from my headquarters staff have spent months laying the groundwork for our transformation.

An equally important part of our transformation is to make life better for AFMC members. While there will be some organizational changes and many process changes ahead, I do not expect any of them to result in a loss of jobs. Transformation is not a downsizing drill! It is a way of thinking and reacting in new ways. It is a means to inject radical improvements in the way we do business. It is about freeing talented people to use innovation and good ideas every day in working their programs.

What I expect is that AFMC employees will be able to perform their duties in a more challenging, stimulating environment. I want to make sure that we are giving people the tools and opportunities to be more successful in the future, professionally and personally. We will provide more opportunities for education and training. We will seek to relieve some of the burdens we have imposed upon people in terms of regulations and restrictions. Our transformed processes should mean fewer obstacles as individuals execute their missions.

I am very proud of the work each of you does on a daily basis! Together, you power the Air Force by providing combat capability. Like your predecessors, you have created and sustained the tools for warfighter success in recent conflicts as well as today’s Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle. I hear how much you are appreciated constantly from the people you support.

But, now is not the time to rest on our laurels. Each of us must evolve with the global environment to meet the demands of future conflicts. We must make the cultural changes required to be successful. We must continue to deliver tomorrow’s technologies in today’s weapon systems, faster, cheaper and better.

What I do, ultimately matters less than what each of you do. I expect you to tell your leaders and me what is needed to improve every facet of our operations. This transformation encompasses every aspect of our mission, from science and technology, through acquisition and test, to sustainment. It will also impact our enabling support processes. Let us know how we can help you better accomplish your jobs. We cannot transform without you!

Ours is an organization with a long history of successful adaptation to change, and I am confident that AFMC’s people are up to the challenge. The threat is real. The imperative is urgent. While many questions remain, our course is charted. Today’s ambitious effort to transform will yield new improvements to the combat capability that America’s warfighters rely on. I am excited about the opportunities ahead, and I urge each of you to share that enthusiasm—or at least to keep an open mind. Our Air Force and our nation depend upon it! @